

When analyzing the merits of the death penalty we cannot allow ourselves to be misled by the proposition's meager claims. When you look at the actual evidence it is abundantly clear that the alleged benefits of the death penalty are illusory, but the bloodshed is very real. It is clear that the death penalty is not effective at deterring or reducing crimes, that it is a cruel punishment that promotes racial discrimination and undermines due process, and that it is not cost effective in comparison to the alternatives. As we walk through this debate and get a glimpse behind the proposition's façade and see the truth behind the death penalty, it is worth keeping Friedrich Nietzsche's words in mind, "Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster"

Looking at my first contention that the death penalty neither deters nor reduces crimes, you can see this just by looking at the American legal system and the psychology of criminals. Theories of punishment can be divided into two general philosophies: utilitarian and retributive. The utilitarian theory of punishment seeks to punish offenders to discourage, or "deter," future wrongdoing. The retributive theory seeks to punish offenders because they deserve to be punished. Regardless of personal philosophy, as Frank Law states, the American legal system shows adherence to utilitarian ideals which means punishment serves to prevent future wrongdoing not just punish for the sake of punishment. We accomplish this in two ways, either by incapacitation or through deterrence. Incapacitation isn't a relevant factor in this debate because incapacitation would be accomplished by both the death penalty or the alternative of life without parole. But deterrence is where the merits of the death penalty are tested. Deterrence is a function not only of a punishment's severity but also of its certainty and frequency, and this is relevant because a punishment is only an effective deterrent if it is consistently and promptly employed. As explained in 2009 by Stanford's department of psychology, this is likely due to the lack of future self-continuity inherent the human consciousness, meaning that punishments far in the future are unlikely to be effective deterrents because people view their future self as a different person than their present self. As Sage Journals demonstrated, the death penalty fails to meet the evident criteria for an effective deterrent because very few crimes are sentenced to the death penalty, and fewer still are executed, and such a verdict is unfathomably far in the future for a criminal. But if the empirical evidence isn't enough, this phenomenon is demonstrated by concrete statistics. The National Academy of Sciences states that research between the relation of homicide rates to capital punishment is uninformative. John Donohue, Stanford Law Professor, states that there is not the slightest credible statistical evidence that capital punishment reduces the rate of homicide. And a recent study by University of Colorado professor Michael Radelet found that 88% of the nation's leading criminologists do not believe the death penalty is an effective deterrent to crime.

In addition to failing to accomplish the intended purpose of reducing violent crime, the death penalty has been evidenced to be a cruel punishment that promotes racial discrimination and undermines due process. The cruelty is demonstrated by the dual punishment faced by those on death row as well as the notable number of botched executions. Brandon Jones, Ronald Bert Smith Jr, Alva Campbell, and Doyle Lee Hamm are just a few of the most recent death row inmates to face botched executions, the most recent occurring on February of this year. Over 3% of executions, or 276 executions, have gone wrong. The Conservation brings up that inmates are being subject to two distinct punishments- the execution, which has been shown to be abundantly cruel, and the decades of waiting in conditions tantamount to solitary

confinement. Furthermore, racial bias is apparent throughout the judicial system, and death row is not exempt. According to the University of Washington, Washington jurors were four and a half times more likely to impose a death sentence upon a black defendant in similar situations to white defendants. More than 20% of black defendants who were executed were convicted by all-white juries, and 80% of those executed since the death penalty's reinstatement have been executed for murders of white victims. And this is all given the fact that people of color and white people commit crimes at similar rates, according to the American Civil Liberties Union. Additionally, the death penalty undermines due process by making someone's life dependent on the quality of their attorney, which is shown by testimony from the Death Penalty Information Center, who stated that "the most important factor in determining whether a defendant will receive the death penalty is the quality of representation he or she is provided." They elaborate that "almost all defendants in capital cases cannot afford their own attorneys and appointed attorneys are in many cases overworked, underpaid, or lacking the experience required for a death penalty case." The right to life should not be dependent on money, skill of attorney, or race of a victim. Given that the death penalty makes our right to life dependent on just that, it is clear we should be opposed to it.

For my final contention, the death penalty is not cost effective, no matter what way you slice it. Although the proposition has claimed that execution is cheaper than life without parole, that simply isn't true. It may be a logical statement, but the facts show the exact opposite. Richard Dieter, former executive director of the Death Penalty Information Center stated that "if the costs of the death penalty were to be measured at the time of an execution then [it may be true that execution was cheaper]. But as every prosecutor, defense attorney, and judge knows, the costs of a capital case begin long before the sentence is carried out. Experienced prosecutors and defense attorneys must be assigned and begin a long period of investigation and pre-trial hearings. Jury selection, the trial itself, and initial appeals will consume years of time and enormous amounts of money before an execution is on the horizon...[A]ll of the studies conclude that the death penalty system is far more expensive than an alternative system in which the maximum sentence is life in prison." The Conservation in August of 2015 echoes these sentiments, stating that "The best research on the issue suggests that life imprisonment is a less costly penalty, since locking someone up is far less expensive than both locking them up and paying a team of lawyers for many years – often decades – to debate whether a sentence of death should be imposed." To give you a better sense of the burden of capital punishment, note that over the past 35 years the state of California spent roughly \$4 billion to execute 13 individuals. The \$4 billion would have been enough to hire roughly 80,000 police officers who, if appropriately assigned, would be expected to prevent 466 murders in California – far more than even the most optimistic views of the possible benefits of capital punishment.

It would be nice if all violent crime could be solved by the deterrent power of the death penalty, but unfortunately this just isn't the case. Arguably more unfortunate is the racial bias and cruelty rampant in the judicial system. No national interest can or should justify human rights violations like the death penalty. And opposing the death penalty does not indicate a lack of sympathy for murder victims, on the contrary- murder demonstrates a lack of respect for our most sacred right of human life. Murder shouldn't be punished with a violent public spectacle of

homicide- we must not turn into the monsters we seek to protect ourselves from. It is for these reasons that I ask you to oppose the death penalty.